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Intelligence Memorandum

Soviet Interest in ASW Limitations

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Soviet Interest in ASW Limitations

Comments by the director of the Soviet Union's USA Institute, Georgiy Arbatov, during a recent visit to the US suggest that the Soviets are concerned about US developments in antisubmarine warfare and could become interested in discussing some form of ASW limitations at the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Arbatov said that ASW limitations should be a priority item for SALT II, that the US is accelerating ASW research, and that Soviet naval leaders are concerned about the vulnerability of their submarines as they enter and leave the North Atlantic area.

Expressions of concern for ASW limitations by the Soviets are new. Arbatov and members of his staff displayed indifference when US representatives raised the subject in 1970 and 1971.

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Arbatov's actions are reminiscent of his behavior during the summer of 1970 when his emphatic and vocal concern for ABM limitations was followed by a formal proposal from the Soviet SALT delegation in the fall.

The Soviet Union lags the US in ASW capability. The technology of Soviet ASW systems is inferior and Soviet nuclear submarines are noisier and easier to detect.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
June 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Soviet Interest in ASW Limitations

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Arbatov's Statements

During his recent visit to the United States, Georgiy Arbatov, the director of the Soviet Union's USA Institute, stated on several separate occasions that the development of limitations on antisubmarine warfare capabilities should be a priority item on the SALT II agenda. He claimed that Soviet naval leaders had expressed great concern over the vulnerability of their submarine fleet as it entered and left the North Atlantic area. He noted that accelerated US research in techniques of antisubmarine warfare might be viewed by the USSR as inconsistent with the expressed US desire to negotiate new agreements at SALT II.

Several factors suggest the possibility that Arbatov's views presage an emerging position of the Soviet SALT delegation. The most important is that today US ASW technology and capabilities are far superior to those of the USSR. Soviet nuclear submarines are noisier and therefore easier to detect than are US submarines. For these reasons, the Soviets may perceive a threat to the credibility of their sea-based deterrent and wish to negotiate some form of ASW limitations. The Soviet leaders may believe a limitation on ASW development or deployment is preferable to the risk of falling further behind in the technological competition in ASW.

Arbatov as a Messenger

In the past, Arbatov has traveled in the West with a well-prepared message which he has reiterated forcefully at every opportunity. In the summer of 1970, for example, during a trip to the United States, Arbatov expressed Soviet concern about US antiballistic missile deployment plans and emphasized the importance of an early agreement to limit these systems. Prior to Arbatov's statements, both sides at SALT I had held that an arms limitation agreement would have to be comprehensive and include both offensive and defensive missile systems. Arbatov's comments during his September visit, however, convinced his hosts that the Soviets might want to come to a separate ABM agreement quickly. Subsequently, in late 1970, the Soviet SALT delegation presented formal proposals for a separate agreement limiting ABM deployment

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in defense of national capitals. By his current remarks, Arbatov could be trying to communicate high-level Soviet interest in limiting deployment of ASW attack submarines and advanced undersea sound detection systems.

It is possible that Arbatov is speaking for himself and his institute rather than for the Soviet leadership when he argues for the inclusion of ASW limitations on the agenda for SALT II. His statements may have been designed to elicit the views and informal comments of various American strategists concerning the factors to be weighed in considering ASW limitations. The negotiating complexities of ASW limitations (for example, definitions, the status of multiple-purpose systems, monitoring by national means, and alliance considerations) resemble those which have emerged during current discussions of forward-based systems and surpass any of the issues encountered during the ABM negotiations. Arbatov's statements concerning the importance of ASW controls could reflect some preliminary analysis of these complexities by his staff.

Arbatov has steadily advanced the expertise, prestige, and influence of his institute within the Soviet Union. If his views are a reflection of recent studies undertaken by his organization, they still could constitute a position which he believes is worth communicating to top Soviet decisionmakers. On this visit, as in the past, Arbatov continued to emphasize his access to the Soviet leadership and the significance of his role as an adviser at the highest levels of the Soviet government and Communist Party.

The Changing Soviet Attitude

Until Arbatov's recent statements, the Soviets did not publicly attach a high priority to the establishment of antisubmarine warfare controls. During the September 1970 Pugwash Conference*, the American participants suggested that ASW systems (attack submarines and large sonar detection systems) be limited

* *The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs were founded at Pugwash, Nova Scotia, in 1957. The meetings provide an international forum for scientists and scholars to discuss unofficially problems of disarmament, scientific collaboration, and aid to developing countries. Conferences are usually held once or twice each year.*

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which the before they were deployed in significant numbers. The Soviet representatives objected to the banning of attack submarines because of the threat presented by the US fleet of aircraft carriers, and they displayed indifference to the remainder of the proposal.

Analysis

In early August 1971, at a Moscow meeting of US and USSR scholars, convened in preparation for the 1971 Pugwash Conference in Romania, the matter of ASW developments was raised by a US participant. But retired Colonel Valentin V. Larionov, a member of the USA Institute, claimed that the subject did not merit discussion. The topic, he asserted, was only in the "realm of conjecture" at this point since it involved facilities not yet tested on location and armaments not yet in national arsenals.

Soviet ASW Programs

Analysis of Soviet production of weapon systems with ASW capabilities (naval aircraft, surface ships, and submarines) since the late Fifties indicates that no specialized large-scale ASW construction program against ballistic missile submarines has been undertaken. There have been surges in the construction of submarines armed with ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, but clearly the Soviets so far have not given a high priority to building a submarine force with a primary strategic ASW mission.

Moreover, despite a substantial R&D effort, the Soviets have not duplicated the success which the United States has achieved with its undersea sound surveillance system (SOSUS). Currently deployed SOSUS systems monitor the Norwegian Sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts of the US, and scattered areas in the Pacific Ocean. The probability of surveillance, however, is much lower for Soviet nuclear submarines on patrol. Soviet development of similar low-frequency sound detection systems has been severely inhibited by both geographic and technological factors.

The fact that US nuclear submarines operate much more quietly than Soviet submarines is probably the

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most difficult problem which the Soviets are encountering in ASW. The Soviets would have to exceed the capabilities of the US SOSUS system to a marked degree to detect US nuclear submarines on patrol.

New Emphasis on Naval Analysis

Within the last 18 months, there have been several indications from Soviet defense intellectuals of a greater sensitivity towards American naval developments, especially in the areas of ASW techniques. Recently, two naval experts were added to the staff of the USA Institute. Previously, individuals with naval backgrounds were conspicuously missing from the staffs of both the USA institute and the Institute of World Economics and International Relations--the other prominent Soviet research institute that has devoted effort to analysis of US affairs.

Early in 1972, Georgiy Svyatov, a retired engineer-captain second rank, joined the USA Institute. Svyatov worked as a submarine designer for the Soviet Navy between 1962 and 1967. Apparently he is now supposed to follow "hardware" developments in the US Navy.

The recent appearance of two articles on the US Navy in the USA Institute monthly journal *USA: Economics, Politics, Ideology* indicates a growing Soviet

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concern for American naval developments. One essay, written by Svyatov, is a fairly straightforward account of publicly announced American naval construction plans. Svyatov noted, however, that the United States planned to expand the construction of atomic submarines "with a chiefly antisubmarine function." In the conclusion to his analysis, Svyatov asserted that further normalization of US-USSR relations would be greatly assisted if the principle of equal security was extended to the field of general purpose naval forces.

The other article, written by Boris L. Teplinskiy, a retired major general of aviation, devoted a significant amount of space to a description of American efforts to create an antisubmarine detection system "embracing the entire vast expanse of the world ocean and of great strategic importance." Teplinskiy had complained in an earlier *New Times* article that Norway, through the NATO treaty, was being turned into a deployment area for an attack on the Soviet Union. In his current article, he further warned that the overall American naval expansion had not escaped the attention of Soviet planners and might evoke an "appropriate reaction." He believed, however, that a solution to the problem consistent with the spirit of the US-USSR agreements signed in May 1972 could be found.

Implications for SSSR

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The new interest in ASW discussions by Soviet defense intellectuals, the additions to the USA Institute staff, the recently published statements on American ASW developments in a prominent Soviet journal, and the apparent substantial Soviet lag in ASW technology support the inference that this is an issue of growing concern to the Soviets. It seems likely that some of them are already considering the problem in the context of arms limitations. The resemblance that Arbatov's recent actions bear to his earlier representations on behalf of ABM limitations in SALT I suggests that he may be promoting a position that has some high-level support in the Soviet government.

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